

Sherlock Holmes: Canon and Curiosities

ENG 303.905: Approaches to English Studies

Fall 2016 / TH 9:35-10:50 @ LAAH 301

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Office hours: TH 1:00-2:30 @ LAAH 405

Course Description

Sherlock Holmes is immortal. Ever since *A Study in Scarlet* appeared in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887, the world's first consulting detective has been its favorite. Though Arthur Conan Doyle tried to kill off his creation—infamously tipping him over the Reichenbach Falls—ultimately, Doyle could not withstand the enormous pressure from his audience, publishers, friends, and family (even his mother!) to revive Sherlock Holmes. Over the past century, fans, poets, novelists, illustrators, filmmakers, television producers, and comic book authors have joined these efforts to keep him alive and reinvent him for different cultural and historical moments. As we sample Doyle's own original writings (the canon) and various adaptations and pastiches (the curiosities), we will examine "Sherlock Holmes" both as a set of texts and as a cultural touchstone.

This fast-paced course will introduce you to Sherlock Holmes in a wide variety of media formats and will ask you to complete a wide variety of assignments as you encounter these Holmesian iterations. You will learn about the relevant social, cultural, technological, criminal, political, geographic intertexts that will make these stories come alive for you intellectually. Five units will focus on specific approaches taken by scholars of English, seen through the lens of Sherlock Holmes. Unit one, Genre and Narratology, investigates Sherlock tales as a genre and an example of detective fiction by using narratological principle. Unit two, Criminality and Cultural Studies, takes a cultural-historical lens to understand the attitudes towards criminal justice in Victorian world of Doyle's stories. Unit three, London and Space Theory, adapts tools from the spatial humanities to investigate the role of London in shaping Sherlock's world. Unit four, Politics and Post-Colonialism, examines the political tropes and structures that support Watson's view on the world and influence the plot of the stories. Unit five, Pastiches and Adaptation Studies, takes an intertextual approach to examine Sherlock's afterlives beyond Doyle.

By the end of this course, you will have encountered Sherlock in just about as many media and textual forms as the great detective has disguises: novels, short stories, illustrated serials in *The Strand*, plays, poems, essays, parodies, TV episodes, silent films, Hollywood films, comic books, and fan fiction. Each unit will require you to complete a very different type of written assignment: a pastiche, a juridical ruling, an annotated map, a scholarly introduction, and a critical book review. Throughout the semester, we'll be visited by the undergraduate office to inform you about career options, academic student services, registration, and scholarships. In short, during this semester, you will become an expert on all things Sherlock Holmes, not only as a fan, but also as an English major.

Texts: Paper (Buy)

Arthur Conan Doyle. *The Complete Sherlock Holmes: All 4 Novels and 56 Short Stories*.

Bantam Classics, 1986 (about \$8 [here](#)): ISBN 0553328255

Nicholas Meyer, *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (1974).

Norton, 1993 (about \$16 [here](#)): ISBN 0393311198

Laurie R. King, *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* (1994).

Picador, 2007 (about \$13 [here](#)): ISBN 1250055709

Texts: Online (Free)

By Arthur Conan Doyle

"The Field Bazaar" (1896) [here](#)

"How Watson Won the Trick" (1924) [here](#)

"The Lost Special" (1898) [here](#)

The Strand Magazine editions: "The Crooked Man," "The Final Problem" (1893)

Both in volume 6. CM is July 1893: (p. 22-32). FP is Dec. 1893 (p. 558-570)

GoogleBooks [here](#): After you click on the link, scroll till you see the table of contents. Click on the title of the relevant story. For "The Final Problem," make sure you start at page 558 to see classic illustration!

HathiTrust [here](#): Type in the first page number in the box "Jump to"

Play script: "The Speckled Band" (1910) [here](#) (you click on the coins)

Essay: "How I Made My List" (1927) [here](#)

Poems: all [here](#): "A Voyage" (1909), "A Hymn of Empire" (1911), "Empire Builders" (1911), "The Empire" (1902)

By Other Authors

P. G. Wodehouse, "Dudley Jones, Bore-Hunter" (1903) [here](#)

John Bangs, "Introducing Mr. Raffles Holmes," "The Dorrington Ruby Seal." Both in *R. Holmes & Esq* (1906) [here](#)

J. M. Barrie, "The Adventure of the Two Collaborators" (1923) [here](#)

Vincent Starrett, "221B" (1942) [here](#)

William Shweickhart, "A Long Evening with Holmes" (1984) [here](#)

Alan Olding, "In Memoriam Moriarty" (1991) [here](#)

David Marcus, "Descent into Madness" (2011) [here](#)

Media: Films and Television

Sherlock Holmes Baffled (1900) – view on You Tube: [here](#)

Sherlock Holmes feat. William Gillette (1916) – disc [here](#)

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes feat. Basil Rathbone (1939)

YouTube: [here](#) OR Netflix: [here](#) OR Amazon: [here](#)

Granada Television's *The Sign of the Four* (1987) featuring Jeremy Brett

Netflix: [here](#) or YouTube: in 11 parts beginning [here](#)

From BBC Television's *The Hounds of Baskerville* series featuring Benedict Cumberbatch

YouTube [here](#) (fee) OR Netflix [here](#) OR Amazon [here](#)

NRK parodies on YouTube (such as this one [here](#) and [here](#))

Learning Outcomes

- A familiarity with the discipline of English studies: its history and major sub-fields.
- A working knowledge of the English major at Texas A&M, including information about university and departmental resources, faculty research specialties, and the mechanics of building a concentration within the major.
- An introduction to the many different kinds of questions scholars in our field ask about texts and their contexts.
- Practice with some of the rhetorical strategies, research methods, and critical methodologies commonly used to engage with those questions.
- An ability to think comparatively and historically about a single cultural phenomenon (e.g., Sherlock Holmes)

Grade Breakdown

Attend/Participate	10%
Project 1: Pastiche	20%
Project 2: Sentencing	15%
Project 3: Map	15%
Project 4: Introduction	20%
Project 5: Book review	10%

Note: To pass this course, you *must* pass the W component of the course and turn in *every* written assignment.

Grading Scale

Taken from official A&M recommendations from the registrar's office

A = 90-100
B = 80-89
C = 70-79
D = 60-69
F = 0-59

Attendance

You are expected to attend class every day and to have the course texts with you. Because this course depends upon your active participation, your grade can be lowered for poor attendance. You are permitted two unexcused absences, no questions asked. For every class missed afterward, you will lose 10% of your attendance grade.

A&M policy defines which types of events might qualify you for an excused absence. You can see these reasons here: <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>. Any illness over three business days (e.g., this includes missing a consecutive Tuesday and Thursday for illness)

requires written medical documentation. You must communicate in a clear and timely manner about any absence you believe should count as an excused absence (illness, family emergencies, and university-sanctioned events). In general, notify me as soon as you *anticipate* an excused absence, and then you must *document* it.

Students who wish an A for participation in class discussions should make at least two or three substantive remarks every single class session. Lukewarm and half-hearted contributions will not earn you an A in participation, even if you have a perfect attendance record. Sleeping, talking, or texting in class will count against this grade, as will working on coursework for other classes. Habitual tardiness, which is disrespectful not only to myself but also to your fellow classmates, will also count against your participation grade. Please keep in mind that this class is intimate enough to encourage lively exchange among your peers. These attendance and participation policies are designed to encourage you to make the most of this opportunity to create rich and productive class discussions.

Attendance and Participation Grading Rubric

A-level participation: Flawless attendance; 3-4+ substantive comments in class discussion per week; never late, tired, or distracted; timely explanation of emergencies or problems in understanding course material; always has books ready; helps other students learn; thoroughly understands the syllabus

B-level participation: Good attendance (perhaps 2 unexcused absences); 2-3 substantive comments in class discussion per week; very rarely late, tired, or distracted; timely explanation of absences/tardies; helps other students learn; thoroughly understands the syllabus

C-level participation: Poor attendance (3-4 unexcused absences); 1-2 substantive comments per week; late, tired, or distracted one or more times per week; sometimes fails to notify me about absences/tardies, but is responsive to my emails/concerns about participation rate and/or to my requests that the student come to office hours for help; occasionally shows signs that student lacks sufficient familiarity with the syllabus

D-level participation: Unacceptable attendance (5-6 unexcused absences); little contribution to class discussion per week; often late, tired, or distracted; does not usually follow up on my suggestions to attend office hours or improve participation rate; disrupts quiz sessions; has not read, does not understand, or does not consult syllabus

F-level participation: Unacceptable attendance (more than 6 absences); little or no contribution to class discussion; established record of missing quizzes; habitually late, tired, or distracted; does not respond to my emails or verbal suggestions about improving performance; has not read, does not understand, or does not consult syllabus

Assignment Descriptions

PROJECT 1: PASTICHE

You write your own Sherlock Holmes story of at least 2000 words (though you may certainly exceed this range if you wish). You can change *only one* of the following elements: 1) place (outside of England), 2) time (can be before or after Victorian period), 3) Watson (Sherlock's companion can be a different person). You should not change anything about Sherlock or about Doyle's writing style. Make sure your crime is typical of the canon (kidnapping, murder, blackmail, theft of something extremely valuable/political). You will be graded on how accurately you matched Arthur Conan Doyle's style, plot, characters, etc, not on how "artistic" your writing is. (However, as you should expect, grammar and proofreading will be graded.)

PROJECT 2: SENTENCING

Pick some contemporary criminal (Bin Laden, Dahmer, the Craigslist killer, Pirate Bay, even Julian Assange or Edward Snowden), and basically create a judicial ruling for it. Learn what happened to this criminal (how they were found out, how they were punished, and how the media represented their guilt), and then tell me how Sherlock (the detective), Watson (the writer), late 19th century Scotland Yard/courts (justice), and newspapers (the media), would have handled it differently from contemporary courts, media, and writers. Choose one specific Sherlock Holmes story we have read for *this* unit as your proof for how criminality was defined and treated in Doyle's era. Reflect in an essay of at least 1000 words on how these differences reflect different concepts of guilt, criminality, justice, and human rights.

PROJECT 3: MAPPING LONDON

Choose one of the stories we have read for *this* unit. Pin at least 15-20 spaces on a GoogleMap that includes a thesis and makes a coherent, essay-worthy argument by using the description functions on the map. (Aim for 2-4 *interesting* sentences of explanation per pin.) Pins should focus on spaces mentioned and/or visited by Sherlock Holmes in the story. They can include spaces relevant for Arthur Conan Doyle's life and other Sherlock Holmes stories *if they contribute to your thesis about your chosen story/novel*. You will have to plan, carefully, the order of your pins and how you assemble an argument as your reader navigates your map. (A more detailed set of instructions will be available to you on Blackboard closer to the due date.)

PROJECT 4: INTRODUCTION

Select a single Sherlock Holmes short story or novel that has a focus on geopolitics and/or imperialism. Then write an Introduction for this story of at least 1500 words that explains the most important historical events, places, and people the reader should know about before reading the story (wars, weapons, treaties, kings/queens, politicians, soldiers, spies, scandals, economic agreements, emigrants, colonies, bureaucratic organizations, etc). *It should use and cite at least 8 sources so that you learn how to complete research and base writing on that research*. You should prepare your readers so that they can approach the text in an educated, informed manner. *Avoid spoilers!*

PROJECT 5: BOOK REVIEW COMPARISON

Choose compare how King and Meyer differently adapt Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and novels. Using examples from these two recent novels, make detailed criticisms regarding why they might have made those choices and how they relate to their respective audiences and publication dates. Write at least a 1,000-word formal analysis with me as your audience. You should be able to conclude something interesting, new, and specific about how Sherlock is seen today. Make sure to take full advantage of your solid "ethos" (your authority and trustworthiness) as someone who has just read a very substantive chunk of the Sherlock canon!

Academic Integrity

The Aggie Honor Code defines the standards to which you are expected to conform. These standards include a stringent, vigilant avoidance of dishonest academic behaviors, such as cheating, plagiarism, fabricating, unapproved collaboration, and multiple submissions. See

<http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/RulesAndProcedures/HonorSystemRules.aspx#definitions>.

If I suspect you of academic dishonesty, A&M has clearly outlined the process for submitting and examining this suspicion, which includes your right to appeal. Possible sanctions include a wide range of consequences, from receiving a zero for the assignment, receiving a lowered grade for the course, receiving an F* grade for the course, participating in writing workshops or community service, being put on Honor Cord probation, or being expelled. You can learn about this process here:

<http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/pdf/AHSO%20Flow%20Chart.pdf>.

Disability Notice

Per A&M policy, "The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call [979-845-1637](tel:979-845-1637). For additional information, visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>."

I am happy to work with you regarding any physical or psychological disabilities or learning impairments that could adversely affect your course performance. I urge you to come by office hours to discuss any accommodations we can make to help you succeed. Typically, a student wishing accommodation should register with Disability Services (DS); doing so will help us identify DS resources to which we would otherwise not have access (such as paid notetakers). Forms you may need are available at <http://disability.tamu.edu/forms#StudentForms>.

ENG 303 Course Schedule

Readings are due BEFORE class; assignments due AFTER class by midnight

Genre & Narratology		
T, Aug 30	Syllabus, introductions (why are you an English major) Discuss: our department and its characteristics	
H, Sep 1	Read: <i>A Study in Scarlet</i> (part 1) Discuss: your expectations about Sherlock Holmes	
T, Sep 6	Read: <i>A Study in Scarlet</i> (part 2) Discuss: the development of detective fiction	
H, Sep 8	Read: “The <i>Gloria Scott</i> ,” “The Musgrave Ritual,” “The Resident Patient,” “The Priory School,” “A Scandal in Bohemia” Discuss: Doyle’s writing style	
T, Sep 13	Read: “The Adventure of the Devil’s Foot,” “The Field Bazaar,” “How Watson Won the Trick,” “The Speckled Band” (1910 playscript only, not the story) Discuss: The structure of a Holmes story	
H, Sep 15	Watch in class: <i>Sherlock Holmes Baffled</i> , <i>Sherlock Holmes</i> (1916) feat. William Gillette	Pastiche
Criminality & Cultural Studies		
T, Sep 20	Read: <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> (ch. 1-8) Discuss: Victorian medical theories of criminality	
H, Sep 22	Read: <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> (ch. 9-15) Discuss: Victorian policing and forensics; <i>visit from Undergraduate office about career fair</i>	
T, Sep 27	Read: “The Solitary Cyclist,” “The Dancing Men,” “The Illustrious Client,” “The Dying Detective,” “Charles Augustus Milverton,” “The Copper Beeches”	
H, Sep 29	Discuss: Victorian justice and court procedures	
London & Space Theory		
T, Oct 4	Watch in class: BBC’s <i>The Hounds of Baskerville</i>	Sentencing
H, Oct 6	Read: <i>The Sign of the Four</i> (ch. 1-6) Discuss: Victorian London	
T, Oct 11	Read: <i>The Sign of the Four</i> (ch. 1-6)	
H, Oct 13	NO CLASS. On your own, watch Grenada TV’s <i>The Sign of the Four</i> (YouTube in parts: begin here)	
T, Oct 18	Read: “The Final Solution” (the online <i>Strand</i> version); “The Empty House” Discuss: Mapping Assignment	
H, Oct 20	Read: “The Red-Headed League,” “The Six	

	Napoleons,” “The Cardboard Box,” “The Norwood Builder” TUTORIAL: Google Maps	
Politics & Post-Colonialism		
T, Oct 25	Read: Doyle’s empire poems (online); “The Yellow Face,” “The Bruce Partington Plans” Discuss: Victorian racial attitudes	Map
H, Oct 27	Read: “The Greek Interpreter,” “The Naval Treaty,” “The Second Stain,” “The Lost Special” (online) Discuss: the British empire; <i>visit from the Undergraduate Office about academic student services</i>	
T, Nov 1	Read: “The Five Orange Pips,” “His Last Bow,” “The Crooked Man” (from <i>Strand</i> online) Discuss: The structure of introductions	
H, Nov 3	Watch: <i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> feat. Basil Rathbone (1939)	
Pastiches & Adaptation Studies		
T, Nov 8	Read: “Dudley Jones, Bore-Hunter,” “The Dorrington Ruby Seal,” “The Adventure of the Two Collaborators,” Watch: Parodies of Sherlock on YouTube <i>Visit from Undergraduate Office about preregistration; look at course descriptions online</i>	Intro
H, Nov 10	Read: <i>The Seven-Per-Cent Solution</i> (ch. 1-9) Discuss: adaptation theory	
T, Nov 15	Read: <i>The Seven-Per-Cent Solution</i> (ch. 10-17) Discuss: adaptation theory	
H, Nov 17	NO CLASS: Read ahead on <i>Beekeeper’s Apprentice</i>	
T, Nov 22	Read: <i>The Beekeeper’s Apprentice</i> (ch. 1-7) Discuss: feminism and WWI	
T, Nov 29	Read: <i>The Beekeeper’s Apprentice</i> (ch. 8-12) Discuss: religion and romance	
H, Dec 1	Read: <i>The Beekeeper’s Apprentice</i> (ch. 13-19) Discuss: final paper	
T, Dec 6	Read: “Descent into Madness,” “How I Made My List,” poems: “221B,” “A Long Evening with Holmes,” “In Memoriam Moriarty” Discuss: Nostalgia; conclusions	

Book review due by end of H, Dec 8 (11:59 PM)